

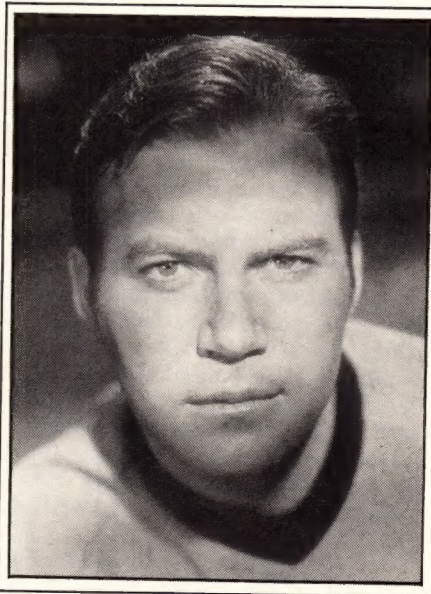


The great enterprise

'Beam me up Scotty!' is a familiar term even to a non Star Trek fan. Chris Adam-Smith looks back to the start of that five year mission to boldly go . . .

Ask a stranger for the origins of 'Beam me up Scotty' and the chances are that, if he doesn't know, he is probably an alien and therefore quite capable of beaming himself up!

The on-going adventures of the USS Enterprise and its virile ship's company has such a world following — of all age groups — that the oft-repeated TV episodes are gobbled up greedily by 'Trekies' third fourth and fifth time around. Now, as well as being able to see *Star Trek — The Movie*, several segments are also available on video. The two latest episodes coming from



Captain Kirk alias William Shatner

CIC on a double episode cassette on the budget Arena label. They are *Space Seed* and *The Changeling*.

The *Star Trek* TV series was launched by Desilu in 1966 and, after a

strong initial success in the American TV ratings for three seasons, the show was cancelled. The uproar that followed is part of TV folklore.

Star Trek was the brain child of Gene Roddenberry an ex-Pan American pilot who began his TV career writing for shows like *Highway Patrol* and *Mr. District Attorney*. He also had a keen interest in sci fi which dated back to his junior high school days and a tattered copy of 'Astounding Stories'.

He sold his first script to TV while working as a police sergeant for the LAPD and, by the late fifties, was writing episodes for such shows as *Naked City*, *Have Gun Will Travel* and *Dr. Kildare*. By 1963 he was producing his own series *The Lieutenant* but as far back as 1960 he had begun to put the format for *Star Trek* together.

He called it '... a sort of Wagon Train to the stars'. He envisaged an ongoing series with a permanent cast wandering the universe in their Starship with an estimated three million planets to visit and the opportunity to introduce a guest star on every one. The basis of the programme would be the ship's

community — and the sleek lady, the USS Enterprise.

As *The Lieutenant* drew to a close in '63 he submitted his idea to MGM. They were not overly enthusiastic. After trying several studios he was finally signed by Desilu who had shown considerable interest in his work. He was assigned to the making of a series of pilots — usually a must before a series is considered — but *Star Trek* was thought to be too risky by CBS and an angry Roddenberry went back to the drawing board.

However, in 1964 Desilu, backed by NBC, went ahead with the pilot from an original story by Roddenberry called *The Cage*. This episode was later made into a two part show and renamed *The Menagerie* — and went on to win the International Hugo Award for filmed science fiction.

Enormous difficulties were faced and overcome and shooting started on December 12th 1964. In 1965 NBC rejected the pilot. They liked it but felt it to be too deep for the majority of viewers. How wrong can you be?

Roddenberry felt that he was to blame, saying, '... I had promised to deliver a Wagon Train to the stars... action adventure... instead *The Menagerie* was a beautiful story... I forgot my plan and tried for something proud'. Considering the cost involved what followed was an unprecedented step. NBC asked for a second pilot.

The Final Frontier

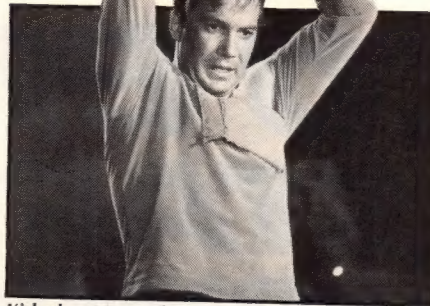
Jeff Hunter who played the Captain — then named Pike — of the Enterprise in the first pilot was not available and the search began for a new starship master.

William Shatner a talented Canadian actor was signed for the part. Leonard Nimoy was set fair as Mister Spock and the rest of the cast gathered in. DeForest Kelly as the space bound country doctor. James Doohan, Scotty the chief engineer. George Takei as Sulu. Nichelle Nichols, Lt. Uhura and Walter Koenig, the young ensign with Majel Barrett as Nurse Chapel.

The second pilot was aptly entitled *Where No Man Has Gone Before* and was chosen from three original scripts submitted by Roddenberry. *Omega Glory* and *Mudd's Woman* — the other two offerings — were filmed as later segments.

The filming was completed in January '66 and from this a *Star Trek* series was approved by NBC. *Star Trek* and the USS Enterprise were telly-bound at warp speed.

Roddenberry drew on many informed sources in order to get the *Star Trek* technology right. The US Space Agency, weapons experts and biologists all gave their advice and he selected



Kirk about to send a rock where no boulder has gone before...

from this. There was a terrific interest in this technology and, in one instance at least, seeing is believing! A man wrote in asking how to design and make sliding doors operate so swiftly and smoothly? He didn't get a great deal of help. Those super sliding doors — that make their counterparts in modern shopping centres look positively decrepit — were opened manually by an 'out of shot' technician.

Roddenberry reckoned that, *Star Trek* is blessed with the finest group of professional actors I've ever worked with' He was right and the public appreciated that very high degree of professionalism. William Shatner and the crew were taken straight to the hearts of the viewing public and a loyal following for each individual member quickly sprang up.

Shatner played Kirk like a space age Captain Horatio Hornblower — just as Roddenberry had envisaged. A tough nut with a very soft centre. Beloved by his crew, respected and resourceful. The very special relationship that developed between him, Doctor McCoy and Mister Spock was totally credible. His flaws were human and accepted. Everybody who followed the series had their particular favourites and the brave Captain was and is mine.

In its third season the show was moved to a later time slot and *Star Trek* went '... where so many had gone before'. It was cancelled. It was dead but it just wouldn't like down. Countless re-runs drew even larger audiences worldwide. Fanzines, cartoons, books, novels, conventions and then — *Star Trek The Movie*.

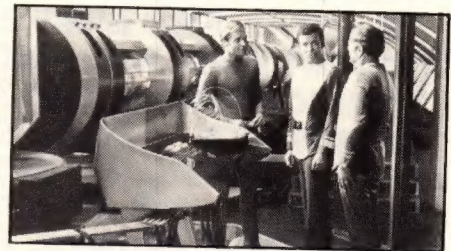
The movie was a very welcome return of the heroes of the USS Enterprise. They had aged a little and were



Tension on the bridge

really secondary to the technical hardware of modern film making. In many aspects it was a disappointing film with the emphasis removed from the characters — and the interplay of their disparate personalities — to the starship itself and the space that surrounded it. Technology was the thing and story, characterisation and adventure were relegated to the sidelines.

Star Trek II The Wrath Of Khan was a much better film in every way. It was much more in keeping with the flavour of the TV series. A villain with a dastardly plot up his sleeve, an adversary worthy of Kirk's attention. In fact the gallant Captain Kirk and his crew had already crossed phasers with Khan before. In 1967 to be precise when in a TV episode Kirk has exiled Khan to a distant planet for trying to alter the genetics of the human race. That episode now available on video was called *Space Seed* and in *Wrath* the villain is again played ably by Ricardo Montalban.



In the engine room of the Enterprise

Kirk is much more self assured and back to his old devious self and the need to wear spectacles doesn't hinder his versatility when it comes to blasting an enemy out of space. The climax — a situation so often depicted in submarine war films with the two space ships blind in space and each awaiting the other to move — is typical of the naval battle analogies so often used in the TV series. Great stuff and the hope of more to come.

The Changeling — also first aired in 1967 — is much less of a personality clash. Kirk's adversary here is a renegade robot. A space probe launched years before which, after sustaining damage by a meteorite, wanders through space destroying planets. The twist is in the fact that it was originally designed by a man called Kirk and it believes the Enterprise Captain to be that same man. Upon realising that it isn't the same man at all the robot is made aware of its fallibility and self destructs.

What next for *Star Trek*? Even though Mister Spock is dead the door is firmly ajar for his resurrection. After all, where would *Star Trek* be if any member of the team were to leave? The cast is the thing and when all of the hardware and technology is forgotten or, overtaken by modern day reality, we